



south dakota
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Memorandum

TO: Superintendents/CEOs and High School Principals

FROM: Dr. Rick Melmer, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Education

DATE: May 11, 2006

RE: Clarification on waived course graduation requirements

Dear Colleagues:

It has come to the department's attention that some school districts have been allowing 8th-grade students to take waived high school courses, but 1) have not been granting the students high school graduation credit or 2) have not been figuring the grades the students earn in these courses into the students' GPAs.

While both of these procedures go against the intent of the waivers issued by the Department of Education, current district policy regarding how credit was granted and how the GPA was figured for waived courses will be honored for students who graduate in the years 2006-2010.

However, beginning with students who are in the 8th grade during the 2006-07 school year (the high school graduates of 2011), the following requirements will apply to administrative rule waivers allowing school districts to teach high school-level courses to 8th- grade students:

1. The course must maintain its original high school-level rigor.
2. The teacher of the course must be certified to teach high school.
3. Students taking the course must receive:
 - A letter grade, which must be figured into their cumulative high school GPA and recorded on their high school graduation transcript; and
 - Credit toward their required 22 units of credit for graduation, which must be recorded on their high school graduation transcript.

4. The school district must record the following on the transcripts of students who take the course:
 - The letter grade the students earned for the course, which must be figured into the students' cumulative high school GPAs; and
 - The unit of credit for the course, which must be figured into the 22 units of credit required for high school graduation.

Questions regarding this issue can be directed to Nicole Kranzler-Gacke or Jennifer Neuhauser at the South Dakota Department of Education, (605) 773-3553.

Regents' requirements for South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship

The South Dakota Board of Regents offers the following clarification related to the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship. As you are aware, students must take four years of high school-level mathematics at the level of Algebra I or higher in order to be eligible for the scholarship.

For any student who graduates from high school **prior to 2011** and who took high school-level Algebra I in the 8th grade and wants that course to count toward the Opportunity Scholarship, **the 8th grade course must have a letter grade assigned to it.** The grade will be used by the Board of Regents to calculate eligibility for the Opportunities Scholarship. (At the local level, school districts *may* use the grade toward the cumulative GPA calculation **prior to 2011.**)

Beginning with the graduating class of 2011, for those students who want the 8th-grade course to count toward the Opportunity Scholarship, the letter grade for the course must be assigned and figured into the students' cumulative high school GPAs, and the course must be recorded on the high school transcript with the unit of crediting counting toward the 22 units of credit required for high school graduation.

For information regarding requirements for the Opportunity Scholarship, please contact Janelle Toman, South Dakota Board of Regents, at (605) 773-3455.